THE MUSLIM VOICE

September 2004 Volume 11 Issue 1 Rajab 1425 A.H.

GETTING INVOLVED WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

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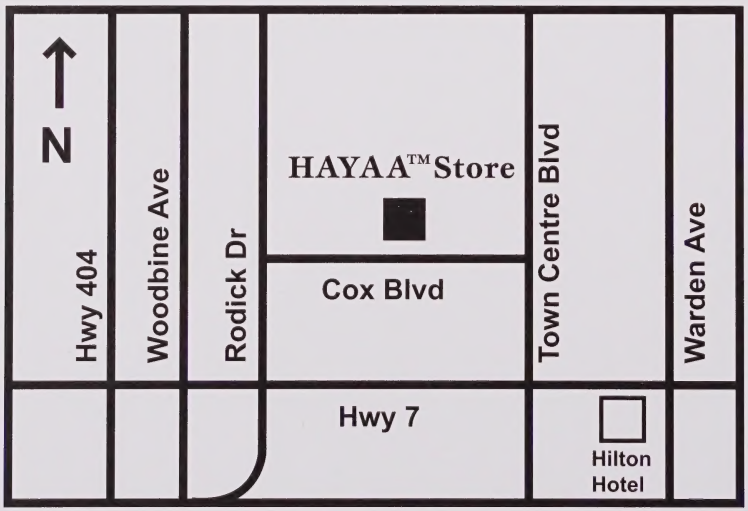

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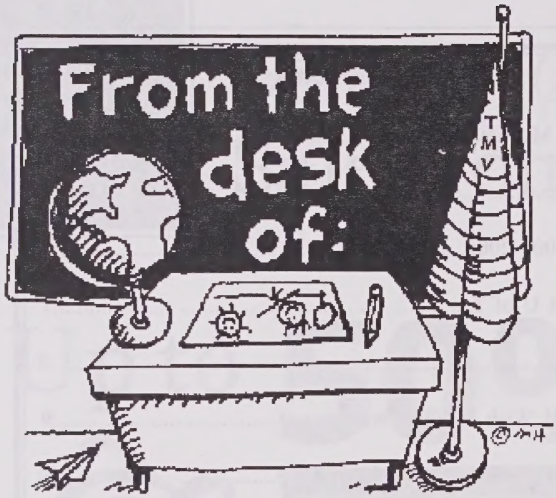


THE MUSLIM VOICE

Assalamu Alaikum (Peace be with you)

On behalf of The Muslim Voice's staff and the Muslim Students' Association, I would like to welcome you to a new school year. I pray that this year will be even more fruitful and rewarding than those that have passed. To start it off, I want to thank my dedicated staff for putting so much effort into the summer issue of The Muslim Voice. Without all of our efforts combined, this magazine wouldn't have gotten off the ground.

I started off with big plans for this little magazine, but ended up realizing that nothing can make this magazine great except for the words within it. I know now that as long as the Qur'an and Sunnah are properly represented, and the articles provide readers with valuable information, The Muslim Voice will be successful no matter what it looks like or what paper it's printed on. Success, to me, is to have affected even one person positively with this magazine.

This year, I endeavor to make The Muslim Voice serve as a source of encouragement and support for new students on campus, to aid in Da'wah (outreach) efforts by presenting and promoting a proper understanding of Islam, and to disseminate and remind readers of many values and beliefs that Muslims should uphold. I would also like to see The Muslim Voice foster an open and friendly environment for learning and discussion. In the end, I just hope and pray that this magazine can truly live up to the standard of what the real Muslim voice should be.

Asmaa Hussein
Editor, The Muslim Voice

Assalamu Alaikum

I would like to take this opportunity to say that I'm grateful to be working as this year's assistant editor. I would also like to share a few words of advice with my fellow students. As we begin this new school year, we should realize that this is a good time for renewing intentions. We spend long hours in class, in the library, spend more hours reading, studying, and painfully trying to get those essays and labs in. What is it really worth if it is all for the sake of material gain? We put so much effort into achieving our academic goals, and if we do so only for the sake of getting a good career, or for the prestige, then we shall miss out on something great: the *baraka* (blessings) of *Allah (subhana wa ta'ala)*. If, however, we strive for the sake of *Allah (subhana wa ta'ala)*, making all that we do for *Allah (subhana wa ta'ala)*, those countless hours we spend trying to get that degree will *insha'Allah* be counted as worship, and we will get the blessings of it. We must remember, however, that good endings come from good beginnings, so we should always try to have the best intentions, *and* try to perform our tasks correctly and honestly from the start. By following this we will be successful individually and collectively, *insha'Allah*! *"O ye who believe! Endure, outdo all others in endurance, be ready, and observe your duty to Allah in order that ye may succeed."* [Qur'an 3:20]

Khalidah Ali
Assistant Editor

Assalamu Alaikum

I am very excited and thankful to have been given the opportunity of working as Assistant Editor of The Muslim Voice this year, along with Khalidah Ali.

Reading over the articles for the summer issue, I feel honored to be part of a publication that, to me, represents the educated, well-intentioned, God-fearing voice of the Muslims on campus. I admit that I sometimes feel cynical about the media and its effectiveness in presenting unbiased, truly representative facts and opinions, but I am filled with hope and optimism about the possibilities for our magazine. It is inspiring to witness the enthusiasm and spirit of *deen* of those involved with TMV, whether on the staff or as contributors. I want to urge all our readers to send in their articles, opinions, ideas, poems or thoughts for our magazine because this is YOUR magazine. Speaking in U of T jargon, you wouldn't let someone else rip off the essay you pulled an all-nighter finishing (even though you received the assignment two months ago), would you? Why let others speak for your mind, your thoughts, your beliefs? It is especially important for us, as Muslims, to have our *real* voices heard in the media these days, to the backdrop of the volatile world situation.

In the end I pray that *Allah (subhana wa ta'ala)* help us in our efforts and bring the light of His blessings as the sun rises on the horizon of a new school year.

Nuzhat Khurshid
Assistant Editor

President's Message

Assalaamu alaikum brothers and sisters,

Four years ago, I came to Canada to join the Ph.D. program in Health Administration at the University of Toronto (U of T). Few months later, I discovered that I have joined a great university, not only because of its academic excellence and superior research capabilities, but also because of the great brothers and sisters that I have met and the beneficial events that I have been involved in while working with the MSA. These relations and involvements gave me the strength I needed to get acquainted with the Canadian culture – the venue needed for social interaction, the chance to discover my weaknesses (so many ☺) and strengths, and most importantly the golden opportunity to work for the obedience of the Almighty Giver (*subhana wa ta'ala*). And like a child growing to learn life, I grew with the MSA to learn the vastness of Islam, the importance of *da'awa* and the value of brotherhood and sisterhood in a Muslim's life. The first year I started as a volunteer, the second I served as a treasurer, the third as a vice-president, and this year as a president. The stranger of yesterday became a part of a very active social network, the growing child of the past became the father of today (Abou Maryam☺), and the lonely heart of yesterday became bounded to hundreds of hearts today. *Allah* (*subhana wa ta'ala*) says in the Holy Qur'an:

"And (moreover) He hath put affection between their hearts: not if thou hadst spent all that is in the earth, couldst thou have produced that affection, but Allah hath done it: for He is Exalted in might, Wise" [Qur'an, 8:63].

Brothers and sisters I am sending you via TMV an open invitation to join your hearts with the bond of Islam. MSA, to many of you, could be more than a student club but rather a setting to work for the sake of Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*), and a venue to achieve the purpose of your creator. Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) says:

"I have only created Jinns and men, that they may serve Me" [Qur'an, 51:56].

The very difficult situation that the Muslim Umma (nation) is passing through nowadays makes it even more important to become more active. We need to join efforts and stand firm against injustices and oppression, continuously reminding each other of the importance of patience at such hard times. *Allah* (*subhana wa ta'ala*) says:

"By (the Token of) Time (through the ages), Verily Man is in loss, Except such as have Faith, and do righteous deeds, and (join together) in the mutual teaching of Truth, and of Patience and Constancy" [Qur'an, 103:1-3].

It is prime time for activism and involvement for Muslims around the world in general and for Muslim youths in particular. It is indeed a time where Muslims need to give their best in guarding Islam, especially those enjoying the freedom of expression in their countries.

I am quite confident that through the help of *Allah* (*subhana wa ta'ala*) and through your participation and advice we can, *insha'ALLAH,* build on the successes that MSA has achieved so far and work to accomplish an ambitious agenda for the academic year 2004-2005. An agenda that includes among other things: working hard to make the U of T campus in general and the MSA in particular more welcoming and accommodating to Muslim students irrespective of their cultures, backgrounds or ideologies; building a more efficient and healthier inter-executive and executive-student body communication; increasing the awareness of U of T students, faculties and staff on Islam and on Muslim world issues; building stronger ties with other campus groups in general and MSAs and Muslim groups in the community in particular and establishing strong and ongoing coordination efforts between the MSA and the U of T administration.

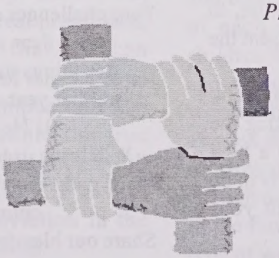
My message for you is clear:

"FIX YOUR INTENTION, GRASP THE OPPORTUNITY AND GET INVOLVED NOW!"

I do ask Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) to guide us all to what is best for us in this life and the hereafter.

Assalaamu Alaikum,

Mohamad Alameddine
President, MSA (2004-2005)
University of Toronto



Meet the MSA Exec

President
Mohammad Alameddine

Let me tell you more about myself. I was born in Kuwait, raised in Lebanon and have worked in the Emirates. I got married five years ago and have a five month old daughter that I named Maryam. I'm currently a 4th year Ph.D. student in Health Administration and planning to finish next summer insha'Allah (You know when you start but never know when you will finish :). My favourite sport is squash, my favorite food is sea food pasta, my favorite sweet is Pecan pie and of course my favorite club is MSA. I would like to invite you all to participate in the exciting activities that MSA is organizing this year. Through its various committees MSA is the place for you. No matter what are your skills or interests you will find MSA a welcoming venue insha'Allah. So why wait? Get involved now!

Vice-President, Brothers
Faraz Siddiqui

I'll try not to be boring, but a well-trained Vice President of the MSA usually *has* a lot to say. After coordinating the groovy Brothers' Events Committee last year I return, slightly more mature, to (using the correct jargon) "represent the brothers on campus"!

I aspire to be your personal link to this huge organization by taking the affability of the executives to a new level. My rather optimistic aim is to be the one who you can bug with your comments, problems and questions about life…errr well, at least about MSA!

Now, a bit about me: I am a.k.a. Chico. I love kung-fu and basketball and enjoy watching movies and hanging out with friends…and I adore kids! Now, if you are already an MSA member, *get ready for some fresh oomph*! New people, I encourage you to find out more about MSA. Contact us and attend our events. Tell us how to make yours a memorable ride through university!

MSA 4 LIFE

Vice-President, Sisters
Asma Maryam Ali

May God's peace and mercy be with you
On the coming year of your lives,
Your brothers and sisters are with you
And together we will strive

To know our selves and each other,
Realize the potential we each possess
To enrich our lives and those around us,
To live more, and regret less.

I can't wait to know more of your beauty,
Allah knows—it really shines through
Your challenges and victories, my dear sisters
Are things that I feel, too.
Another year of our sojourn
—If He wills—
Will bring us to new heights,
We'll gather our strength and our courage,
Share our blessings and our light.

General Secretary
Aaida Mamuji

Alhamdulillah, I have been elected to be the 04-05 MSA secretary. After having served as the Students for World Justice Coordinator last year, I am looking forward to another exciting year working with the MSA! Although I am supposed to introduce myself, instead, I would like to take this opportunity to inform all our new comers that the MSA is fun, exciting, spiritually uplifting and here for you if you need anything. Each year our membership grows and this means meeting new people and learning new things. To make things even more exciting, this year we are launching an MSA RETURNS appreciation program to encourage all of you to participate and volunteer at our events. Make sure you pick your MSA RETURNS booklet if you do not have it yet…its wallet size and ensures that you get great prizes for involving yourself (how much better can it get?) …I'll leave the introductions for when we meet.

Treasurer
Adeeb Hussein Sharif

I thank Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* for an opportunity to serve the Muslim community on campus as treasurer this year. I would also like thank everyone for their support. This upcoming year I hope the M.S.A will serve the academic experience bigger and better than ever before, by building unity within the

community, and outreaching throughout campus. Finance is the oil to the machine of blood, sweat and tears that is the M.S.A and I hope my can of WD40 keeps things running smoothly!

Academic Affairs Coordinator
Sana Siddiqui

Firstly let me introduce the latest committee of MSA to you: Academic Affairs. Yippee..! Of all the MSA activities I am most passionate about this one. My reason? This committee has the potential to help you be successful Muslims in any field you venture. Since you are part of a great university you have potential that is enormous, unique and rare. If God wills, this committee is here to help you carve this potential to make you a future leader. Think of your potential like a piece of wood that you have to carve and this committee as one who gets expert carpenters to advise you! And how do we work? How about checking out our website (www.utoronto.ca/muslim)!

Now a little more about me - I came to Canada two years ago as an international student. Last year at the last MSA sisters' event I got the "most cheerful sista" award so maybe that gives you some clue ;) If you want to know, how about meeting up? You are sure to find me in Academic Affairs meetings. Have a great year!

Religious Accommodations
Osman Hamid

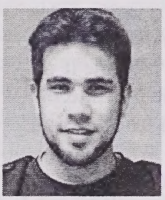
My name is Osman Hamid, and I am the new Religious Accommodations Co-ordinator for the MSA general body (that's you guys and any other Muslim on campus). My goals when I took this position for the year were very simple: To get a permanent prayer space and to facilitate any matters which required religious accommodations such as exam deferrals due to Eid or Halal food in the different residences and food providers on campus.

Please feel free to approach me about any concerns about prayer space or any religious observance that requires accommodation. We will assist to our utmost capability, and Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* will make it easy *insha'Allah*.

Community Affairs Coordinator
Aasim Hasany

MSA Community Affairs is a committee for those interested in fulfilling the Islamic obligation of community service and development. From organizing food drives for the city's homeless to mentorship programs for our youth, we hope to acquaint students on campus with a general sense of community belonging and awareness. In a neglected practice of our GTA Muslim community, our goal is to reach out and work for our neighbours and fellow brothers and sisters. As coordinator, it is with great responsibility and excitement that I hold this position for the upcoming year. May Allah purify our intentions and guide our efforts.

Da'wah/Outreach Coordinator
Gamal Seif



During the past year, I've been blessed to have met many brothers and sisters while working with a very successful Da'wah team. As the year progressed, I came to realize that we can effectively fulfill one of our duties as Muslims here on campus; we can effectively teach people the true message of Islam and that people will actually be receptive to it. I've thus attained a strong conviction in the importance of the Da'wah committee, and the goals that it hopes to achieve. During the past few years the MSA has been blessed by very successful Da'wah campaigns, achieving more and more each year. Insha'Allah I pray that we will be able to maintain this trend for the sake of Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)*

As for me personally, I recently graduated from the University of Waterloo (please don't take that against me), and I'm now doing research at the Toronto Western Hospital, which is proving to be a very challenging experience (*alhumdulillah*). As for my interests, I mostly like just spending time with my family and friends; however, I do play goal keeper in soccer (which I guess you can consider to be some sort of physical activity). I also like eating (a lot), and it doesn't really matter what (as long as its Halal).

However, what I most look forward to now is meeting new people, both Muslims and non-Muslims and engaging in activities and discussions to help people understand what it means to be Muslim; and I pray to be able to do so along side all of you.

If you would like to join in our efforts, please either stop me if you see me on campus, or e-mail me at msa_outreach@yahoo.ca

Students for World Justice
Tahereh Garshasb

In the past year, we've borne witness to a multitude of atrocities around the world; war-rampaged countries deteriorating in social and economical terms with the passing of each day; increasing reports of children becoming targets of violence and abuse of the most degrading form; women being denied their rights to express their faith and beliefs in order to strengthen secularist ideals. It is enough to make one despair at what lies in the future of humankind, and of the type of world we are to live in. What

will happen to the next generation of youth?

Subhan'Allah, In the midst of all the sadness and tragedy, there still remains hope that justice *will* persevere and that against a united front, oppression will diminish. It was with this hope that that Students for World Justice was created, and judging by the way this organization has expanded and matured over the past few years, it becomes safe to say that the determination to fight oppression in any form, is still a passionate ideal amongst the youth today.

This year, SWJ has decided to take the fight for injustice a step further, by launching lectures and panels to make people aware of the plight of innocents in regions not often spoken of, such as Tibet and Chechnya. God willing, we'll also be hosting panels featuring important political muslimah figures who have witnessed tyranny and struggled to defeat it.

While our ideas are numerous, they are not closed by any means or measure, and we take great pleasure in coordinating events that have been suggested by our fellow brothers and sisters. It is on that note that I invite each of you to become an active member of our growing force. I welcome and urge you all to sign up for our committee this year, and look forward to working with you to help bring about justice in the precarious world that currently faces us.

Remember: "the dead cannot cry out for justice; it is a duty of the living to do so for them."

Events Coordinator, Sisters
Riman Khadra

Welcome to another exciting year! I must admit that after a very harsh first year, the only thing that kept me attached to U of T was the MSA....so MSA is pretty cool...especially Sisters Events. As you already know, sisters are special, and so deserve to have a special time. We will work together to ensure there are all sorts of events (halal of course), from socializing to sports, so that we can have a break once in a while from school and at the same time get *ajer* for it with the right intention *insha'Allah*. Our events will include.....actually, I won't spoil it for you; you'll find out as the year progresses! Don't forget to pass all your ideas and suggestions to msaevents@hotmail.com. Stay tuned for all the fun stuff Sisters Events has prepared for YOU!

Events Coordinator, Brothers
Ahtisham Ashraf

The dashing committee of MSA, the Big Brothers Events Committee is back to serve our brothers on Campus with some mind blowing Halal fun. Some amazing events have already been planned for the year and the rest is left for your imagination. Some of these mind blowing events include a renewed form of TGIJ's, formal and informal dinners :) with some fun-loaded picnics. In sports, an Ontario-wide cricket tournament, soccer and table tennis tournaments with a special Foosball tournament are coming up this year. Besides these we are planning regular Thursday night informal outings at places suggested by you all. And the rest, anything that you want to see happen. So bring out any crazy ideas you have, we will insha'Allah put them to action. Now all this is possible if we all work together and help create the atmosphere of brotherhood and sisterhood on campus without any boundaries. So please come out and work with your brothers and sisters on campus to make these events a smashing success. We will need all your prayers and support to make these events possible, so mail us with all your suggestions and support at msaevents@hotmail.com.

Editor, The Muslim Voice
Asmaa Hussein

I'm excited to be part of the MSA team this year, and hope that I will be able to contribute positively through my work as TMV editor. So far, the MSA meetings have been quite interesting and kind of productive. And I've got big plans for this year, so by the grace of Allah, I hope to accomplish a lot. Just for the heck of it, let me tell you a little bit about myself. My hobbies include writing poetry, eating good food, not studying, leaving the country without telling anyone, and having a good laugh. So don't be shy! I want to hear your ideas and comments. Email me at: muslimvoice@yahoo.ca (and don't worry, I can take criticism well :)

Communications Director
Shuaib Ally

What, they ask, is a pigeon phobia? Or, why does the MSA logo in MSA-L never line up? Notice that? It's the kind of thing that annoys slightly on a good day but becomes unbearable around exams. It's what I intend on rectifying as the MSA's self-proclaimed spin doctor. Right after building upon our relations with UofT administration. And working out a scheme to strengthen our standing and voice in the many areas of campus life. And fine-tuning our policies. Give me a shout; tell me what you like about the MSA, and how you think we can help it better serve your needs. I promise to listen before going into damage control mode. Have ideas for improving our communications strategy? Want some input into the covert ops of the MSA? Just walk into any coffee shop on campus and ask for Igor. I reckon we can work something out.

Frosh Life: First Year at U of T

Here you are in August, sitting with your *Calendar* and *Timetable* getting ready to choose classes. Come September *insha'Allah*, you will be one of those holding a map of the campus, trying to find your classes. Who are you? You're a First-Year student a.k.a. a Frosh.

Not only do you have to worry about finding your classes, there's also the waiting in long lines to buy your books, and getting to your classes on time, as well as keeping up with the pages and pages of reading and homework assignments. *Alhmadulillah*, you've been accepted into university and maybe you've waited all summer for it or maybe not but it's finally here. It's a stepping-stone into the future, an opportunity to learn more about yourself and other people.

So, what is first year really like? There are tons of guides and books out there telling you about how to survive first year or lists of do's and don'ts. However, there isn't really one formula for succeeding in university; it's a mix of triumphs and failures but the failures in themselves are learning experiences. Also, for the first time, you are more in control of your education because you get to choose your courses, professors and how to manage your time. You may change your decision about your major (so they really aren't carved in stone) and encounter situations that you never thought you would. The key to it all is balance - balancing your academics, religion and other aspects of life and always having faith in *Allah (subhana wa ta'ala)* and asking for guidance in whatever you do. Above all, you must remember to take it as it comes and not be overwhelmed because learning how to balance is not something that can be done overnight.

Here are some practical tips on what to expect. The first-year classes at U of T are usually huge. They are made up of hundreds and in some cases thousands of students. This means the professors can't provide individual attention to each student. You are left on your own to study and do the homework, which in most cases is not collected. If you never had to study in high school then I suggest that you make it a habit *insha'Allah*, even if it's for a short amount of time everyday. Since most of the courses at U of T are full-year, this will be especially useful at the end of the year come exam time, and you won't find yourself cramming as much. Also, you should keep on top of your readings. I know it's very tempting to leave them for later and besides, it's not like you'll have reading quizzes on them or anything, but the sooner you do them, the better off you'll be. At first thirty pages may not seem like much, but as it becomes sixty and then ninety, times two or three classes, plus a paper coming up, reading the material when assigned is a good idea. Overall, procrastination is not the road even though your mantra all throughout high school was "I work better under pressure."

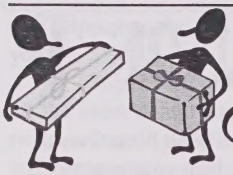
When you are having a problem with a class, make sure you address it immediately. Go talk to your professor and get your questions out into the open. This may seem intimidating or you may feel embarrassed but professors provide office hours for this very reason and most professors are ready to help. If you are still having difficulty with the material then go talk to your counselor at your College. They may be able to help suggest what the next step can be. However, notice how all of this is from your own initiative. In University, there is no one sitting around asking you if you need help; if you need it then you have to be responsible and make sure to ask for it.

You may find at first that making friends in your classes is a bit difficult. There are so many people, and there is no guarantee you will sit beside the same person each time in a great big lecture hall. It never hurts to turn around and say 'hi' to the person next to you and make friendly conversation. Another great way to meet people is to join clubs on campus. There is the MSA with all of its exciting activities planned for the year. Here you have the opportunity of meeting new brothers or sisters who may be in your position or have taken the same classes as you have and be able to provide you with some advice. Going to the events and getting involved with the MSA is a great way to meet other people and give back something to your *deen* as well. There are numerous other clubs to join, depending on what your interests are. Doing extra curricular activities can provide balance to the academics and help you meet other people as well.

First years seem to have twice the workload - adjusting to their new environment as well as keeping up with the workload. But *insha'Allah* as the year goes on, you become accustomed to your schedule and learn to prioritize. It is a learning experience and takes a lot of practice as well as discipline.

Lastly, welcome to U of T! The four years here seem to start off slow but then go by very quickly. Ask for help and patience from *Allah (subhana wa ta'ala)* to get through difficult times and thank Him (*subhana wa ta'ala)* when you are successful. Take it as it comes and remember that you will get out of it what you put into it.

Afroza Faruque
2nd Year, History
University of Toronto (St. George)

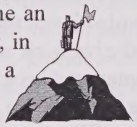


Give a Little of Yourself

It's just before mid-term and you're worn out. You've been sleeping four hours max a night and eating very little. Your schedule keeps you on the run all of the time, from lectures to labs to tutorials to meetings. Someone asks you to volunteer your time and you think…

I just don't have the time.
Besides schoolwork and a few minutes of R & R every week, if at all, you have no time to do anything else. This may seem true. But try to give a little in little ways. Remember, volunteering your time doesn't mean joining an organization and committing yourself to major tasks. Among the ways that Muhammad *(sallAllahu alaihi wasallam)*, the Messenger of God to humanity, said that we could give charity are smiling, removing harmful objects from a path, speaking kind words to people, and helping people carry their things. These are some of the best ways to volunteer your time!

No way! Working with an organization is agonizing.
It doesn't have to be that way! If you really want to turn those little deeds into waves of change, schedule just a few minutes a week to join a team effort. Know your capacity, know what you're best at, and give that and only that to a team. You might lift only one box at a food drive, but one that feeds a starving family for a week. You might share one great idea at a meeting, but one that could become an enduring project that saves lives. Remember, in the realm of good, sincere work, a little goes a loooong way.



I need help! How can I help others?

Some of us are in dire need of help with our emotional, spiritual and academic struggles. One of the wonderful aspects of working with others is that we connect with them for the same cause, and from there we're able to build solid relationships with them. We thus become supportive of one another in many ways. Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* says in the Qur'an, ***"Those who believe and do good works, [Allah] the Beneficent will appoint for them love"*** [Qur'an, 19:96].

Meeting new people and learning about their experiences also enhances our understanding of life, which helps us to better cope with our difficulties. Besides these great benefits, volunteering our time for a good cause gives us a heightened sense of purpose in life, which can last longer than the few years we spend at university. Giving a little of ourselves is really a great way for us to help ourselves. The poet Edwin Markham wrote:

"There is a destiny that makes us brothers: no one goes his way alone, all that we send into the lives of others comes back into our own."

I feel uncomfortable working with the MSA.
When you give a little of yourself, you're ultimately giving for the sake of Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)*. This doesn't necessarily mean working for the MSA, but any work that's done with good intentions in the right way. The MSA is just one of the many groups on campus to which you can give a little. If you're uncomfortable with it, make it comfortable! Get to know the MSA executives. Contact them. Meet them. Get together with other Muslims. Your added touch will help the MSA expand in scope and vision. Over the past couple of years, bright new faces like yours have enhanced the MSA. Let yours be the next!

Remember, you're in charge of your life and your time. If you don't let the idea of volunteering scare you, it won't. Give just a little of yourself, and may Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)*, the Most Generous and Most Merciful, reward you immensely for it. Ameen!

Asma Maryam Ali
Vice President, Sisters

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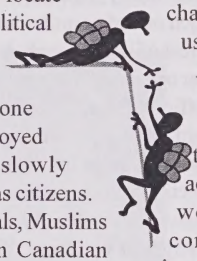
ISLAM IS ABOUT SERVICE... I WISH MUSLIMS WERE TOO

With 25% of Toronto's population living in poverty, Muslims must ask how well we have understood the Prophetic precedent and fared in carrying out the religious injunction to serve and better our communities.

Amidst the uncertainty that often explains the Canadian Muslim experience, it is time us privileged students of higher learning to pause and reflect about our shortcomings and successes as one of Canada's largest and vibrant religious groups. Specifically, as residents of Toronto and students of its most acclaimed university, we must begin to locate ourselves as a community within the social and political currents that shape this city.



It is without doubt that in the span of one generation, Toronto's Muslim community has enjoyed unprecedented economic success which is slowly beginning to materialize as we grow and mature as citizens. From the city's top journalists to its top professionals, Muslims have managed to set a remarkable foothold in Canadian society. In addition, our mosques, schools, and community centres have reinforced values of peace, justice, and tolerance – core principles that form the backbone of this city we call home.

Yet, all is not cozy in the GTA. Unemployment is dramatically increasing, especially among visible minorities; homelessness is on the rise, and poverty rates are disturbingly high (even among Muslim families); the social services and high standards of living that many of our parents sought from this country are slowly becoming an illusion of the past.[1] The country which has given us so much in terms of freedom and the ability to pursue knowledge, is now in need of its benevolent caretakers to rise to the challenges and give back to its ailing communities.

This call to serve – echoed by commentators, activists, and politicians alike – is nothing new for us Muslims. Community service, after all, is the legacy of this *Ummah*; its ideals are enshrined in the Qur'an and established in the Prophetic example.[2] It is time for us to be perfectly honest: Ours is a religion of mercy and service; ours is a religion for the community.

Despite inheriting a tradition of heightened social awareness, concern and action, our Muslim community in Canada – as if not feeling any geographical communal attachment – has surprisingly ignored a practice that defines our history and continues to penetrate all levels of society "back home." While Islamic organizations in Muslim majority countries often shoulder the role of the state in providing the necessary social services, Muslim involvement in Toronto-wide development projects remains abysmal.[3] Our concern for others is shamefully put to question, and rightfully so. How can we claim to be a religion of social justice when we ourselves are unwilling to roll up our sleeves and open our hearts for those around us?

As we witness a world of incredible complexity and chaos, we must begin by thanking Allah for bestowing on us immense favours that others can only dream about. As Muslims living here and absorbed in the calamities that plague our brothers and sisters abroad, we must always remain hopeful. Though we may not be able to solve complex world issues, the least we can accomplish is to fix our communities at home. It is time we work for our neighbours, contribute to our communities, and shape our country. But most importantly, it is time we acknowledge our natural disposition as God's agents on earth and work for the betterment of our fellow human beings. As students with pressures of time and money and future careers in sight, we must take some time to learn the ideal of giving and serving so that one day, we too may receive as well.

Aasim Hasany
MSA Community Affairs Coordinator
University of Toronto (St. George)

1. See the city sponsored reports, "Toronto Report Card on Housing and Homelessness 2003" and the 2002 study, titled "Ethno-Racial Inequality in Toronto."

2. See Chapter 107 in the Quran, Surah Al-Maun and the many Hadiths pertaining to "feeding people" and "looking after the poor." (i.e. As narrated 'Abdullah bin 'Amr, "A man asked the Prophet, 'What Islamic traits are the best?' The Prophet said, 'Feed the people, and greet those whom you know and those whom you do not know.'")

3. A quick look at any modern Islamic movement in the Muslim world would show that despite differences in approach and ideology, all seem to base their foundations on grassroots initiatives. Even the more controversial Islamic organizations are widely acknowledged for delivering timely social services to those in need. In fact, these groups often gain popular support *because* of their social work rather than their political views.

Want to make a difference?
Email MSA Community Affairs: msa_comm@yahoo.ca

The Orphans:
Brothers and Sisters that need our help

Alhamdulillah, we live our lives virtually carefree, in a country with a national health care system, state-of-the-art hospitals, daycares and access to everything we need. We don't have much to worry about; the main concerns on our minds as students are to get good grades, get into med school or other professional/graduate faculties and get a good job. We've really been blessed by *Allah* (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*) & take this life for granted. We've become immune to the news of innocent people being killed all over the world, in places such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia, and too many others. We hear or read about people dying all over, feel sad, say *Innal lillahu wa innal alayhi rajiun* & then switch the channel to watch our favorite reality show. Have we ever thought for a moment about the consequences of such news? A person has died, he/she has left this world, left behind people that loved & cared about him/her. Equally importantly, he or she has left behind people who depended on them - not only emotionally, but for the simple things we don't bother to be thankful for, such as food, clothing, education and medication.

Every day we see on TV familiar images of children who barely survived after their families were killed. We are naturally affected by this, but we cannot even begin to imagine what's in store for those children in the days to come. In many Asian and especially African countries, the head of the households are children, not even in their teens, looking out for their younger brothers and sisters. Why? Because parents are dead, for reasons ranging from natural deaths to disease and violence. Whatever the cause of death, the main point is that none of those children have a father or a mother who is there for them, who can take care of them, who can cook for them, who can tuck them in at night...

We have many things to be thankful for, each one of us individually. Of course the test of life is tough, but it is much tougher on some. I used to think things were difficult for me when I had to get the right grades, regularly do household chores and get into U of T. But this perspective changes when you witness a documentary where Western reporters ask Afghani children "What would you like to have?" and a child answers "Meat, I'd love to have meat!"

Meat? Something that is a mere choice to us, is a luxury for another.

After seeing that, how can someone not feel ungrateful when realizing all that we are blessed with? Does your life look hard to you? Now can you feel like saying "Why GOD, why is my life so hard?" I was completely speechless; saying *Alhamdulillah* for all that I have was the only thing that came to my mind.

Just to give you some stats on the Orphans around the world: the UNICEF fact sheet for 2004 estimates that by the end of 2003, there were **143 million orphans aged 0-17 in 93 developing countries**. More than 16 million were orphaned in 2003 alone. That data is now almost a year old. Seeing the situation in Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan and the AIDS crisis in Africa, these numbers sadly have nowhere to go but up. To break it down according to regions, Asia had the highest number of orphans, then Africa (one reason being that Asia has a much larger population).

Islam always speaks about the obligation and responsibility upon us to take care of the orphans. There are a number of *Hadiths* and *Ayaats* in the Qur'an mentioning the importance of spending in charity, taking care of orphans & Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*)'s dislike for those who do not treat orphans and the needy properly and fairly.

Narrated Sahl bin Sa'd (Radiya-Allah anhu):
The Prophet (sallAllahu alaihi wasallam) said, "I and the person who looks after an orphan and provides for him, will be in Paradise like this," putting his index and middle fingers together. [Sahih Al- Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 73, Number 34]

MSA Orphan Sponsorship Program

It had a modest beginning in 2002-2003, *Alhamdulillah* sponsoring 7 orphans. The following year things were a bit different. The Students for World Justice (SWJ), one of the eight committees of the MSA and the one overseeing the orphan sponsorship program, had a more ambitious goal during the period of Ramadan: '30 days, 30 orphans'. The amount needed to achieve this ambitious goal seemed impossible, but faith in *Allah*

(subhanahu wa ta'ala) was always there. As our intentions were to seekthe pleasure of *Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala)* and to help our dear brothers and sisters all over the world, *Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala)* enabled us to achieve our goal.

At the end of Ramadan, two things had not gone according to MSA plans. First of all, Ramadan was 29 days and not 30. The second was the final count of orphans we were able to sponsor – the number came to 41 orphans!!! *Alhamdulillah.*

.

The kindness and generosity of the Muslim students on campus and of everyone else who donated was simply overwhelming. Donations kept on coming even after Ramadan had passed, thus the number of orphans going to be sponsored kept increasing. It was truly a blessing.

Jazakum Allahu Khairan to all of you who donated. No matter the amount, even if it was a dollar, it made a difference and made you part of those receiving rewards and blessings for sponsoring orphans. *Jazakum Allahu Khairan* to all the volunteers who helped out and to those who helped in spreading the word by telling others about the orphan sponsorship program. May *Allah (subhanahu wa ta'ala)* bless you many times over (*Ameen Suma Ameen*).

BUT it's not over yet!

Insha'Allah for this upcoming Ramadan, we hope to continue with the Orphan Sponsorship program. Although we've (*Masha'Allah)* sponsored 41 orphans, that's just enough for taking of their basic needs and necessities for a period of one year.

We have to re-sponsor these orphans this year and for years to come *Insha'Allah*. *Masha'Allah,* 41 orphans is a lot and more than we had expected, but seeing numbers such as 143 million orphans in the world should only encourage us to help more orphans. Thus increasing the number of orphans being sponsored will also be a priority. The orphans currently being sponsored are from a number of countries, just as our MSA is comprised of a multicultural mosaic of Canadians. These countries are: Kenya, Kashmir, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Palestine, and Lebanon. This year we hope to (*Insha'Allah)* add more countries to the list, such as Bosnia, Sudan, Somalia and Guyana. We are hoping to sponsor orphans from other countries as well (such as Kosova and Chechnya, etc) but a lack of recognized orphan sponsorship organization in these and other countries is one limiting factor. The money is used to feed, educate and provide shelter and other basic necessities for the orphans.

I have a big request to our readers. **Please Donate Generously!!!** If you gave last year, please continue to do so again. If you were not able to give previously, then please start now. Some would say being students, our income is limited, but that's what everyone said last year and it did not stop the program from being successful! Give what you can; form a group by getting your friends, family and/or fellow students together and taking the responsibility of sponsoring an orphan for a year. Please also SPREAD THE WORD! Tell anyone and everyone who can give - your parents, relatives and friends. Since everyone has to pay their *zakat*, we are encouraging people to pay their *zakat* via the Orphan Sponsorship porgram.

Anyone interested in donating, please make your cheques payable to:

Orphan Sponsorship Program

c/o Muslim Students' Association
UofT St. George campus

Address:
Muslim Students' Association
21 Sussex Avenue
Suite 405
Toronto, Ontario,
M5S 1J6

(For further information about the orphan sponsorship program, please contact: msa.exec@utoronto.ca)

In the end I would also like to request you, our readers, for something equally important - your prayers and duas for all the orphans and needy brothers and sisters around the world.
Jazakum Allahu Khairan

Farhan Muhammad Asrar
Faculty of Medicine
University of Toronto (St. George)

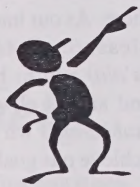
"And they feed, for the love of Allah, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive,-

(Saying) "We feed you for the sake of Allah alone: no reward do we desire from you, nor thanks.

"We only fear a Day of distressful Wrath from the side of our Lord."

But Allah will deliver them from the evil of that Day, and will shed over them a Light of Beauty and (blissful) Joy."
[Quran 76:8-11]

New Year, New People



All praise is to Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*), the Creator, Provider and Sustainer of the worlds, and we send peace and blessings to our beloved Prophet Muhammad (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*).

In the rapidly changing, chaotic world that we live in, we tend to go through life without taking a pause and thinking of issues that have a great impact on our lives. Of course this is quite normal, since part of our make-up is to adapt to the circumstances we are in, in order to be able to survive. Yet, there are moments or events that force us to stop and take a closer look at what we do, how we do it and to analyze the consequences of our actions.

Here it is; the new academic year has approached already! I can still remember starting the previous academic year and worrying about courses, books, mid-terms, projects and all the stress that comes along with it. It just reflects the essence of time in this life and shows how such a valuable thing is passing in a fleeting manner, without us taking a deeper look at our actions and our goals. Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) swore by time in the Holy Qur'an showing us its essence and importance;

"By time, indeed man is certainly in the state of loss."
[Qur'an, 103:1-2]

The completeness of the Islamic legislation implied that it did not leave out any aspect of human life, individualistic or societal, without a system and a set of manners. This is not a surprise since it is legislated from the Creator, The Most Glorious and the one who knows whom He created. Considering the flow of brothers, sisters and colleagues who will be joining us as new students and staff, it is an obligation upon us to look into this event and see how the ideal Muslim should react. The moral teachings and precepts of the divine prophets and their moral behavior are the best means of leading man to his ideal life. We are taught to show certain manners and act upon morals in all occasions to prove the comprehensiveness of this religion. In an occasion of receiving new staff and students, one should look into such an incident and see how we are required to react according to the teachings of our beloved Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*).

Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) regularly addresses the believers in the holy Qur'an as a nation. Not only that, but the best of all nations, since we enjoin good and forbid evil. Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) has said

"You are the best nation that has been raised up for mankind. You enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency and you believe in Allah." [Qur'an, 3:109].

Therefore, it is a responsibility and a trust upon us to fulfill those qualities that Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) has bestowed us with. We should be helpers to those who are newcomers to the campus by showing them around, giving them support and assisting them in obtaining their needs. As a nation, we should be assistants to one another as our beloved prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*) commanded us. It is narrated by Abu Musa that Prophet Muhammad (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*) said

"A believer is like a brick for another believer, the one supporting the other." [Muslim 32:6257]

A matter that should be taken into consideration is that such prospective students and staff may be in a state of nervousness and tenseness until they are adapted into the new environment. A Muslim should always have that in mind and act according to that. Being merciful and kind-hearted is a quality that should be emphasized on such an occasion to make our colleagues comfortable in the new setting. Prophet Muhammad (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*) clarified to us how such qualities are vital in a Muslim's life and how the avoidance of such qualities could have negative effects in one's life. Jarir bin 'Abdullah narrated that Prophet Muhammad (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*) said: *"He who is not merciful to others, will not be treated mercifully."* (Bukhari 73:42)

Prophet Muhammad (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*) and his companions went through keen hardships in Mecca as they tried to live their lives as believers. The Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*) never attempted to retaliate against the insults and disrespect towards him, and forgave people's mistakes or their misconduct. His reaction to the torment and disregard of the ignorant people was forgiveness and tolerance.

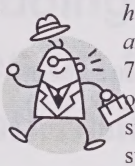
Upon entering Ta'if to spread the message of Islam, the Holy Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam)* was pelted with stones by its inhabitants and driven out of the town. He and his lone companion began to bleed profusely but were still pursued several miles out of Ta'if. Yet the compassion and forgiveness of our beloved Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam)* was such that when an angel descended upon him and asked if he would like his persecutors to be destroyed, he replied, "No, I hope that of these very tormentors

would be born those who would worship the One True God." (Bukhari, Kitab Bad al-Khalq).

Similarly, but to a much smaller magnitude, we as current students, by offering and providing help to newcomers, should be ready for any mistreatments or offensive responses. A Muslim should be lenient and soft in his/her reactions, whatever the situation might be. Those elite qualities are those that distinguish a true Muslim from anyone else. Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*), even upon ordering Prophets Musa and Harun *('alayhum assalaam)* to talk to the pharaoh of Egypt, the biggest tyrant at that time, commanded them to be lenient in their speech. Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) said:

***"And speak unto him a gentle word, that possibly he may heed or fear"* [Qur'an, 20:44]**

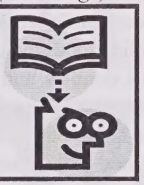
By following those simple qualities and manners, a Muslim is set as an ideal example in the society, attracting people to our way of life, manners and religion. In addition to that, the Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*) stated that, "*The best amongst the believers are those who have the best manners and character.*" (Bukhari 73:56B). Let us pray for our fellow students and staff for a smooth and successful academic year, and that Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) continuously unites us as a nation and provides us with success.



Last, but not least, don't forget to smile! It **does** make a difference.

Ahmed Abdel-Rahman
MASc Civil Engineering
University of Toronto (St.George)

"Long Live The Book"
-A Message from The Muslim Voice



Continued from "Journey" Page18...
encouraged to walk, and I could not let myself blindly follow those before me. I heard and listened to so many ideas, all justified in the name of Islam, that it dawned on me... **we are all going on our own journey**. We are all searching for the path, and may God guide us on our search. I had foolishly entered Islam thinking that the Muslims had it all figured out. "Surely" I said to myself. "They had studied that same Qur'an I studied, and some of them have been Muslim all their lives. Islam should be flourishing amongst the Muslim community!" Alas I was wrong, horribly wrong. Islam is more like an ideal among the Muslims then a reality. Islam is a standard that takes a developed character to reach, it takes time, knowledge, wisdom, and faith.

My journey to Islam has taught me that. *May God guide us to the straight path.*

Nadia Lalla
Sociology & Law and Society
Graduate, Honours B.A., York University

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PLACES TO BE ON CAMPUS

Places to Eat

Halaal Food on Campus:

Sid's South Side Café – on the South side of Sidney Smith Hall
For those who love burgers and hot dogs, Sid Smith's South Side Café serves them at their halaal food counter. Other halaal food meals are available as well.

Sanford Fleming Cafeteria – in the Sanford Fleming Building
Luckily for Engineering students (and others who are willing to venture into an engineering building!), the S.F. cafeteria serves halaal food as well.

Burwash Dining Hall – at Victoria College (89 Charles Street West)
The Burwash Dining Hall offers a halaal choice menu for Muslim Students every day.

Halaal Restaurants:

Popeye's
Of course we all know and love Popeye's, and luckily for us, there's one right on campus! Just go to the corner of College and Spadina and you'll find one right beside the Burger King (on Spadina, just south of College).

Something to Talk About
This restaurant serves a variety of food: shawarmas, burgers, pasta, Mediterranean, and Indian food. They have shorter hours than other businesses, so you might want to check with them before you make the journey, only to find out that it's closed!
Directions: Go East on College right on University Avenueà left at first set of lights (Gerrard St.) pass first set of lights on Gerrard; the restaurant is located in the yellow building on the left hand side of the street (78 Gerrard Street West). Their phone number is 416-260-1752.

Exotic Tandoori
From the name, anyone can guess that this restaurant specializes in Indian Cuisine.
The restaurant is located at 11 Charles Street West. Charles Street begins just North of the Museum subway station on the east side of Queen's Park (before Bloor St.!). The number there is 416-964-1616

Coconut Grove
Coconut Grove sells a variety of West Indian foods including curry (all types), roti, doubles, and chow mien. The food is very good, so if you have never had the chance to try West Indian food, you should really check this place out.
Directions: East on College South (right) on University East (left) on Dundas; the restaurant is on the right side of the street.

Places to Pray

International Students' Centre (ISC)
A permanent prayer space has been designated for Muslim students on the third floor of the ISC (33 St. George St.).

Sussex Court
In the Sussex Clubhouse (21 Sussex Avenue), there is a multi-faith prayer room located on the 5th Floor in room 508.

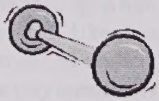
OISE
For those who have classes at OISE (252 floor Street West), there's a multi-faith prayer room located on the 8th floor in room 136.

Masjid Toronto
For those who have the time, or are in that general area, Masjid Toronto is the best place to pray near the University of Toronto campus. The mosque is pleasant and comfortable. Masjid Toronto is not only there as a place of prayer, but can provide a peaceful escape from the city. For sisters, there is a comfortable lounge area located in the sisters' prayer area. To get there, travel East on College, then go South (right) on University Avenue. From University, go east (left) on Dundas St.; the mosque is located on the left side of the street.

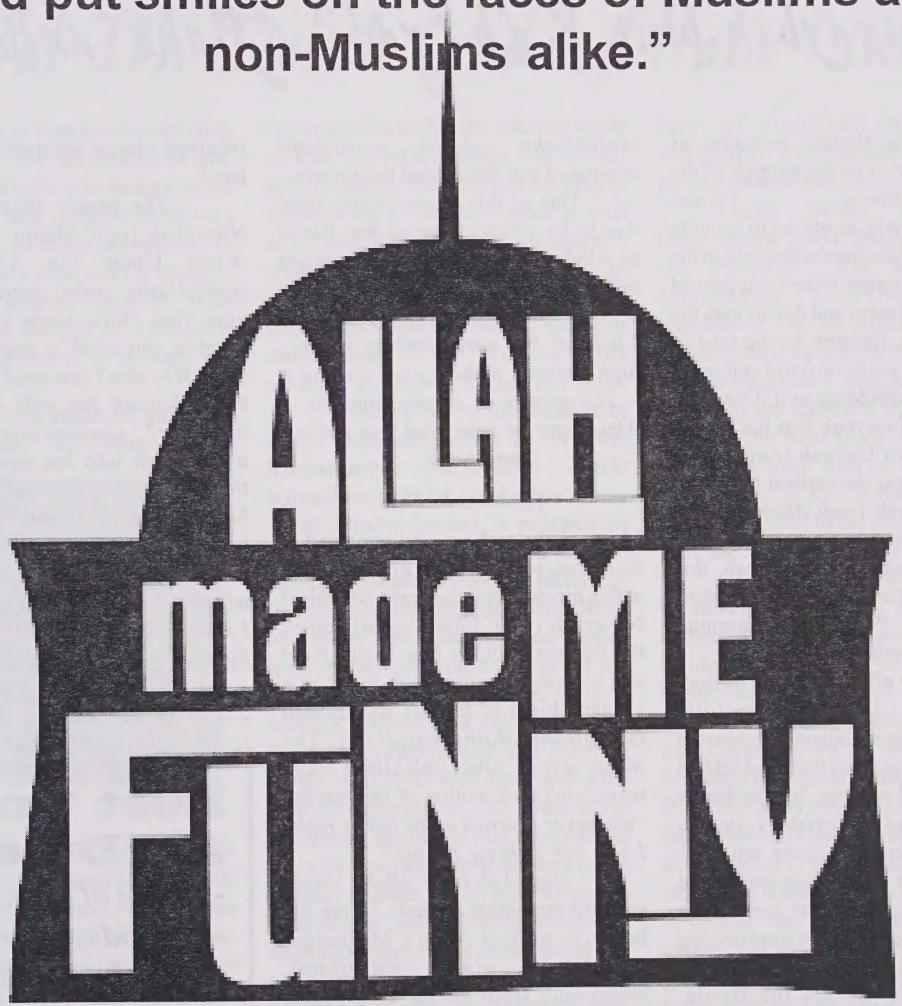
Other Things to Do On Campus

ROM Friday Nights
If you're into history, art, or natural science, the Royal Ontario Museum is a great place to visit. On Friday nights from 4:30pm to 9:30pm, the ROM offers free admission for all ages, and no one can argue that free is not a good deal! The Museum is located at 100 Queen's Park, at the corner of Queen's Park and Bloor.

UofT Athletic Centre
After all that food, and since you're paying for these services, you might want to check out the Athletic Centre. For sisters who are kind of afraid to go for reasons concerning hijaab, the AC has provided women-only time slots for their weight room, which are Monday 12-1pm, Tuesday 5-6pm, Wednesday 12-1pm, Thursday 5-6pm, Friday 1-2pm, and Weekends 10-11am. Tuesday 5-6pm, Wednesday 12-



"Through our humor we validate who we are
– by doing for ourselves –
and put smiles on the faces of Muslims and
non-Muslims alike."



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www.allahmademefunny.com

Great Muslimah:

Nusaybah bint Ka'b (radi'Allahu 'anha)

Islamic History provides us with great stories of the women of the *Salaf-us-Saliheen* (pious predecessors) who continue to provide inspiration for Muslimahs throughout the ages. These women were unsurpassed in their commitment and devotion to the cause of Islam, fighting for the sake of Allah (*subhan wa ta'ala*) and enjoining in good and forbidding evil. One such woman was Nusaybah Bin Ka'b, also known as Umm Umarah (*radi'Allahu 'anha*). Amongst the earliest reverts to Islam, Nusaybah (*radi'Allahu 'anha*) was one of only two women present at the second pledge of al-Aqabah, this small group of companions pledged their allegiance to Prophet Muhammad (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*).

A year after the Battle of Badr the Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*) began mobilizing the Muslim men after getting word that the Makkan pagans wanted revenge for the heavy losses they had incurred. Nusaybah (*radi'Allahu 'anha*), along with her second husband and her two sons joined the fighters. For the most part during the Battle of Uhud, women were tending to the injured and providing water for the mujaheeds. Before the Battle, Rasullullah (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*) had commanded a group of archers under the direction of 'Abdullah ibn Jubair to guard the army. They were commanded to keep their positions, regardless of whether the battle was going in favour of the Muslims or not. When the battle seemed as if it was going in favour of the Muslimeen, many of the archers disobeyed Rasullullah's (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*) command and abandoned their posts.

Due to this disobedience, what was to be a victory turned into defeat as Allah (*subhan wa ta'ala*) explains in the Quran:

Behold! You were climbing up the high ground, without even casting a side-glance at anyone, and the Messenger at your rear was calling you back ...

[Quran, 3: 153]

Many of the archers who remained at their posts were killed as a result. It was at this moment that the brave Sahabiyat Nusaybah (*radi'Allahu 'anha*), joined the fighters with her bow in one hand and her sword in the other, to act as a human shield to protect Rasullullah (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*). The Messenger of Allah (sallAllahu alaihi wasallam) took notice of this saying "*whenever I turned to the left or right, I saw her fighting for me.*"

Nusaybah (*radi'Allahu 'anha*) endured numerous wounds during the battle to protect Allah's Messenger (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*). Nusaybah's (*radi'Allahu 'anha*) jihad for the sake of Allah (*subhan wa ta'ala*) was not confined to the Battle of Uhud, as she was also present at the signing of a number of treaties including the Treaty of Hudaibiyah and Hunayn. She was also instrumental in the battle at Yamamah, under Abu Bakr's (*radi'Allahu 'anhu*) caliphate, when she fought under Khalid Bin Waleed's (*radi'Allahu 'anhu*) charge she received eleven wounds and lost her hand.

The people thought well of Nusaybah (radi'Allahu 'anha) also. When Umar ibn Al- Khattab (*radi'Allahu 'anhu*) came with some very fine cloth, some people said, *"Surely, this cloth is worth such and such. Why don't you send it to Safiyah bint Ubaidah, the wife of Abdullah ibn Umar?" someone else said, "Send it to the one who has more right to it then her, Umm Umarah, Nusaybah bint Kab (radi'Allahu 'anha), for I heard the Prophet (sallAllahu alaihi wasallam) say,, 'On the day of Uhud, whether I looked to the right or left, I saw Nusaybah (radi'Allahu 'anha), fighting round about me.'"*

SubhanAllah! A woman who was unfazed by the glitter of this dunya

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Best times for Du'as:

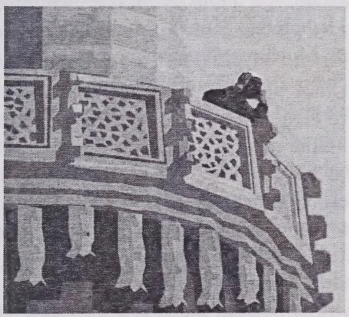
-Middle of the night
-On Friday after Asr
-When it is raining
-Laylat¡ ¯ul-Qadr
-At the time of athaan and between it and the iqamah
-Being a parent, while fasting and while traveling

Great Muslim:

Bilal Ibn Rabah (radi'Allahu 'anhu)

Bilal was born into slavery thirty years before the arrival of Islam. Although Bilal's life was dictated by the unjust norms and customs of slavery and servitude to a human master, he grew up to be a man with a sense of morality and refined character. Bilal also possessed the gift of a beautiful voice that was known to be deep and melodious.

Bilal's strength of character assured him advantages and opportunities within the Meccan world of trade. Bilal's honesty and natural aptitude earned him the responsibility of maintaining his master's trade as well as leading the caravan of his master's tribe when it journeyed abroad. In addition to these qualities, Bilal's melodious voice was often a source of entertainment for Meccan trade caravans en route to Yemen and Syria.



Shortly before the message of Islam was delivered to Prophet Muhammad *(sallAllahu alaihi wasallam)*, Bilal and Abu Bakr (*radi'Allahu 'anhu*), a prosperous Meccan merchant, met on a caravan route to Syria and developed a friendship. It was during this trip that Bilal visited a monastery with Abu Bakr and learned information that would change his life and the lives of all people forever. Having listened to a dream that Abu Bakr had experienced and learning where Abu Bakr was from and what tribe he belonged to, the monk at the monastery explained that a messenger from God would rise from among the people of Mecca. When Bilal wondered which of the idols in Mecca would send such a messenger, the monk stated that a messenger would be sent from God, "...the Creator of the heavens and the earth, Who has no partner, and will commission him [the messenger] to worship Him alone, and to treat their kindred well and he shall destroy the idols."[1]

For Bilal, the news of a messenger sent from a single, all encompassing Creator was strange, even shocking, but most of all, soul-stirring. He began wondering if these idols of wood and stone that he worshipped so devotedly could even protect themselves from ruin.

Later, when Abu Bakr (*radi'Allahu 'anhu*) brought word that the Prophet had appeared – Muhammad *(sallAllahu alaihi wasallam)* son of Abdullah - Bilal contemplated the simplicity and truth of the message and decided to accept Islam. In the darkness of night, Bilal went to Abu Bakr (*radi'Allahu 'anhu*) who then took him to the Prophet *(sallAllahu alaihi wasallam)*. Bilal pledged himself to the new religion and took the Shahada (testimony of faith).

Bilal, imprisoned by the shackles of slavery, rose out of darkness and embraced the light of Islam. His devotion to idols of wood and stone turned to bitterness and contempt for a way of life that denied acknowledgment of one, true Creator. Like all the other early Muslims, Bilal practiced Islam in secret. But when news of Bilal's conversion to Islam reached Umayya, the news of the new religion of Islam had caused furor among the leaders of Makkah. Umayya, of course, was furious that a slave he owned, fed and clothed could have the gall to reject the religion of his master's forefathers and accept a new religion that ensured the equality of all human beings under one God.

In response to Bilal's conversion, Umayya demanded that Bilal reject the notion of one God and the existence of Muhammad *(sallAllahu alaihi wasallam)*, the Messenger of Allah. Bilal refused. Umayya responded with

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(from previous page) and risked her life for the Prophet (*sallAllahu alaihi wasallam*) and became a fierce fighter in preceding battles for Islam. Sisters, we should look back and study the lives of the women of the *Salaf-us-Saliheen* (pious predecessors), who fought to establish Islam in their society. May Allah (*subhan wa ta'ala*) increase us in deen and imaan, by such inspirational stories and may He (*subhan wa ta'ala*) grant mercy upon Nusaybah (*radi'Allahu 'anha*), a true warrior for Islam. Ameen.

Sirad Shirdon
University of Toronto (Mississauga)

A Journey to Islam

When I was asked to write a piece on my journey to Islam I was a little bit overwhelmed. I have a hard time believing that other people would find such a topic interesting, especially for an article. Moreover, any individual's journey to Islam is unique and personal; many emotions, thoughts and ideas travel through a person's mind, and cannot be articulated in retrospect. The thought process one has been engaged in months (or as in my case, years) ago is easily forgotten. Despite this, one idea has always remained clear to me. I accepted Islam as the true religion because it proved itself to me.

Yes, it proved itself. You see, I was not a passive recipient of knowledge. I sought it, I critiqued it and I turned it around and viewed it from different angles, I became intimate with it and knew all its curves and features. When I was done I literally had no choice left except to acknowledge that I had been shown the truth - or to lie to myself and turn my back on what I now knew. This occurred over a period of 4 years, not including the one year of study, thought and reflection I spent before embracing Islam. It was this active intellectual process that brought me to Islam and it is a process which I intend to use throughout my life, however long God wills it to be.

I remember clearly how I hesitated to take that first step and say the testament of faith. Not because I was unsure of my choice, but fearful of the changes I knew it would bring. At the moment I took *shahada,* I did not land myself on the stronghold of Islam. I had only taken my first step on a long and winding path.

Too many people think that the journey of a person to Islam reaches its pinnacle at the moment he/she accepts it. As if all that is left to do is implement the rules and regulations of religious life, to instantaneously assume the ideology of all pre-existing Muslims. This however, was contrary to the very methodology which had led me to Islam in the first place.

Nevertheless, I softened my critical approach and attempted to apply another Islamic principle that I was aware of, that of seeking knowledge with those who know. I began to attend lectures and discussions, and to talk and listen to Muslims. I was inundated with cultural views, societal expectations and the premise that the right answer… is any answer that can be given. I attempted to sift through the vast amount of explanations I was given, trying to assimilate and compile this knowledge into one cohesive system that made sense. I ultimately failed.

I hadn't realized it yet, but it soon became apparent that the Islam that I fell in love with, the Islam that demanded honest personal reflection, vigorous analysis and active questioning, did not necessarily exist amongst my brothers and sisters in Islam. On the contrary, many people thought that to question was a sign of disbelief, to explore an indication of weak *Iman*… to think for oneself an insult to the scholar.

Don't misunderstand me; not all Muslim think this way. Maybe not even many, but along my journey I was destined to meet these types of individuals, those with much information but without the wisdom to understand it.

What was I to do? I would talk or listen to Muslims who argued that *Hijab* was to help men control there desire, as if men were nothing but animals who thought with their loins and not their head, as if Islam was about being responsible for someone else's sins! I listened to Muslims make excuses for the murders of innocents, Muslims who were more political then religious, Muslims who simplistically thought being Muslim was equal to being good and clean while being non-Muslim was equal to being bad dirty. I learned of women who sought help out of an abusive relationship only to be told that God would reward her for her patience. I heard people claim that a woman's voice should be concealed and hidden, that covering one's face is obligatory, that public spaces from the mall to the streets should be segregated, and I realized that these people did not think beyond the words they said. Surely if they did, they would realize that their ideas had no practical applications.
And Islam is absolutely practical.

I learned of the *salafis* and *tablighees*, *Hanafi*, *Maliki*, *Shafi* and other streams of Islam all searching for one noble cause, the establishment of the principles of Qur'an and Sunnah.

So many philosophies and ideas - I heard many people speak well about the information they had gathered, and people who could provide interesting explanations, yet I rarely heard the voice of the intellectual Muslim.

All praises be to *Allah (subhana wa ta'ala)*, Who must have known where my journey was taking me. I was getting lost - lost amongst the criss-crossing threads of Muslim life. I did not know where I was being led or what path I was being

Continued on Page13

JOB SEARCHING? 8 TIPS ON HOW TO GET THROUGH THE INTERVIEW SUCCESSFULLY

Are you dreading the thought of having to wear *hijab* in a job interview? Do thoughts of surprised or disapproving looks haunt you? As a young Muslimah who has been to over ten interviews in the past year, I am hoping to share a secret that will conquer your fears, Insha'Allah :

Allah will provide from his abundance and getting a job is not hard for Allah to do. Allah says ***"BE"*** and it is. You will do fine in all situations with the remembrance of Allah.

Now, with that said you will still need to do your part and here are some tips along the way. Remember, if an employer doesn't want you for who you are, you don't want to work for them anyway. A company that has a truly progressive employer who is seeking to embrace diversity in the workplace will appreciate the skills that you have to offer. The key is to communicate this clearly and they will look past the *hijab* and see the great person that you are, Insha'Allah.

There are preparatory steps that you can take prior to the interview. This is strongly recommended if you hope to set yourself apart from others.

1. Research! Research! Research! Research the company. Visit their website, read their annual report and inquire with those who might know about the particular organization you are interested in. This will prepare you for the question of ''Why do you want to work for us?" The company wants to see if you are truly interested in them or just finding any 'job'.

2. Know the job description well. Highlight the skills and qualifications they are looking for and provide our own short story or example for each. Be able to paraphrase what the job requires or demands and you will appear highly interested. This prepares you for the questions: ''Why are you suitable for this position? Why should we hire you?

3. Prepare your list of questions. Questions regarding expectations of this position in the first six months, reason for vacancy, opportunities for advancement and others show your interest in them. Remember you are choosing them as much as they are choosing you. You need to ensure the match is a good one. Often this can make a difference between you and another candidate.

4. Arrive early and definitely on time. If you are going to be late, call ahead of time. A good rule is 15 minutes early to relax, refresh yourself in the washroom, read the job description, fill out an application form on the spot, review your notes and list of questions and yes, even your own resume. Have copies of your resume with you as well.

5. Smile, shake hands (when appropriate) and remember, your first impression is your lasting impression. Be prepared to tell them about yourself and remember to provide relevent experiences to the position you are applying for. You can thank everyone for providng the opportunity to meet with you. If you notice anyone staring, smile, ignore it and move on with the interview being kind and gracious to all questions and the questioners. Often, they are seeing how you react under pressure and/or allowing time for their eyes and brains to absorb your communication style and Islamic flair for fashion. You can break the ice with friendly small talk, big smiles and staying composed.

6. Listen to each question carefully. Think before you speak. A 2-3 second pause is appropriate. Ask them to repeat, explain or provide more details of the question if necessary.

7. Remember, questions vary and you can be asked about how you deal with certain situations, your interactions with co-workers, how motivated you are, and whether you are capable of handling stressful situations. The key is not being perfect, but showing how you solve problems and look for ways to handle difficulties in a professional and pleasant manner.

8. At the end of the interview, thank all interviewers again, and ask them when you can expect to hear response. Smile graciously again, walk medium paced out the door and look just as energetic as the beginning of the interview.

Practicing interviews with someone, reading more about interviews and remaining positive are keys to this fun step in getting a job. These individuals have taken time out of their schedules to hear about you. The key is to win them over with your personality, skills, and uniqueness that will have them calling you back to congratulate you on receiving the employment opportunity, Insha'ALLAH.

Iris Chan

TO VOTE OR NOT TO VOTE?

Don't Vote!

I will present a view against voting in non-Islamic political systems and begin by reminding my respected brothers and sisters of the enormity of judging by non-divine laws and applying Islam in a piecemeal manner. Please reflect upon [Qur'an, 2:85, 208], [Qur'an, 10:59], [Qur'an, 12:40], [Qur'an, 5:45, 47-50], [Qur'an, 4:59-60, 65], [Qur'an, 33:36], and especially [Qur'an, 24:48-49, 51-52, 55]. As every argument made in favour of voting finds scant justification in *Shari'ah*, the piece will center on anticipating then rebutting the most predictable of emotionally-based appeals.

The story of Yusuf (*'alayhi assalaam)* is often cited as an example of lawful participation in governance, though there is no indication in the narrative that *Yusuf ('alayhi assalaam) performed* anything but an administrative role in Pharaoh's land or that he contravened his *Shari'ah* in preference to Pharaoh's laws. An important distinction must be made between administrative and law-making posts, as critics are quick to cry foul at Muslims voting regardless of whether or not the candidates will be assuming positions to legislate in defiance of divine laws. Note that it is legislative democracy, voting to instate legislators, and participating in such legislation which is at the center of the debate and not electoral democracy or merely living under non-Islamic governance.

The mainstay of the pro-voting position lies in appealing to Muslims not to shy away from public life, making a frantic attempt to connect voting to Islamic outreach, and sealing the plea with the "doomsday" scenario in which failure to vote is equated with resultant religious oppression. Fortunately, posing at the ballot box is independent from *da'wah* just as openly voicing Islamic values and defending the welfare of the community are all civil rights issues, defensible regardless of who is in power. In fact, since voting is anonymous, winning candidates are neither beholden to anyone who voted for them nor able to distinguish between partisans and non-partisans. As community representatives, they are obliged to serve voters and non-voters alike since the two are indistinguishable the day following elections. Then there is the scenario in which one is faced with candidates, all of whom openly intend to rule by non-Islamic laws and values, but one of which intends to prohibit some religious obligation.

There is also a rampant abuse of the jurisprudential concept of *maslaha* or "public interest". *Maslaha* alone is insufficient to make an act lawful, especially when it is in conflict with a divine law, when it is speculative and hypothetical, or when the act in question is avoidable. If *maslaha* is not guided by an indication in *Shari'ah*, the result is chaos in rulings where halal and haram become only applicable in some places, or to some but not to others. This opens the gates to corruption and violates the timelessness of *Shari'ah*. In fact, the jurisprudential principle of S*add al-Dhara'i* "blocking the means [to sin]" prioritizes preventing an evil over securing benefits. In general, means take the ruling of the ends to which they lead. Hence, selling grapes to a winemaker is unlawful even if there is no intention to drink or sell wine. Similarly, it is the difference between opening a bank account paying negligible interest and creating an account that pays maximal interest but which one uses to pay alms, justifying the act with the "*maslaha*" of the poor. Usury is forbidden and the prohibition is not lifted depending on how the unlawful income is spent. In the same way, engaging in an unjust system of governance and granting persons authority to legislate un-Islamic laws to procure *maslaha* parallels supporting a usurious system for the public good. A system based on enslaving the poor could never be defended by channeling intrinsically unlawful money back to them. What, then, can be said about an oppressive system of governance?

Sadly, those who defend voting are not even united on any candidate. This very absence of political unity that will continue to be the cause of Muslims' oppression here and elsewhere; it is no wonder that those who support voting fear hypothetical and oppressive "doomsday" candidates as they bicker amongst themselves and vote against one another. The strength of the Ummah will forever lie in its adherence to Islam in every facet of personal and social life, not in settling for the patronage of the least oppressive ruler.

"And hold fast, all together, by the rope which God (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves…Be not like those who are divided amongst themselves and fall into disputations after receiving Clear Signs: For them is a dreadful penalty"

[Qur'an, 3:103,105]

Louie Al-Sabeq, Chemical Engineering
University of Toronto (St. George)

THAT IS THE QUESTION...

We Must Vote!

We Muslims in Canada are Canadians! We have the same rights, the same power and authority as any other group, community and religion. Thus, voting is a means of expressing this right. We have to decide who takes care of our taxes and how they are spent. Similarly, we have to choose who is going to represent us and be our voice internationally. How will we do that by not voting? The arguments I've been hearing is that we should not vote at all until all of our demands can be met. Here's a reality check - I doubt in the entire history of elections in any country on this planet has any voter agreed with each and every policy and ruling of a party they voted for. This does not mean if we do not agree on everything, we don't need to be a part of it. You can't have the cake and eat it all (of course we hope and pray of a day we have a political party that truly represents us)! Not even the politicians themselves agree 100% with the ideology being held by their own parties. An excellent example was the Newfoundland Random-Burin-St. George's riding where the NDP candidate was Father Des McGrath, of whom some would regard as an anti-abortion crusader but representing a party that is pro-choice.

By not voting, we are not standing up for or against issues that affect us as Muslims and as Canadians. The power of voting gives us the ability to voice our opinions and enables us to make positive changes. A common example to give is the so-called largest democracy in the world, India. Muslims, although a minority there, represent a significant number of the voting population. Muslims have always voted for the Congress party in the past, which has been important to the party's success in previous elections. When the demolition of the Babri Masjid took place on December 6th 1992, at the time of the next elections, Muslims showed their disgust with a government that failed miserably to take care of its people and by not voting for them resulted in Congress' loss. So, the average person used the power of change that he or she had, i.e. voting, and showed the policymakers that they do have the power to remove them from office.

I've spoken numerous times with people who consider it wrong to vote, saying that by voting, one is choosing the lesser of two evils and until we get a party that totally goes by our beliefs we should not vote. How would that be possible if we do not become part of the system first? We must show that Muslims are part of this country; as Canadians we ought to look out for Canada's and our best interests. Even though we Muslims are a minority here, we still have the complete rights to be represented and our needs being answered to and that is accomplished via voting.

Coming back to the Canadian elections, if we do not show that we as Muslims have a significant impact on the elections (which we do have, if we all vote), then no one's going to listen to us. We must first see all the policies of every party and choose the one we agree with the most. In rebuttal to those who hold dear to the idea that Muslims should not vote just because they don't agree on all the party's policies, I say that we need to be a part of positive change no matter how small it may be. If we had the ability to make some positive change, but we lost the opportunity, we will be held accountable for it. The Qur'an was not revealed all at once, it took 23 years because change takes time! Thus, we cannot expect any positive change to occur overnight and we should not expect any change if we don't make an effort. By ignoring our responsibility to vote, it is like saying, "Go live in a cave! Don't do anything and hope for divine intervention to make the change." Yes, that change can happen if Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) wills it, but let's hope change would not include replacing us with a better people, who will strive to make a change. Let's make an effort to be among those people who are included as people of substance whose voices will be heard.

Let's make the best with what we have and try to continue to improve upon it. Today, if a party is trying to get the Muslim vote, they would propose changes that would benefit us. By voting we demonstrate that we appreciate that concept and by not voting we show that we don't care, and thus a lack of response on our part would lead to our voices being completely ignored.

Next time around, who am I going to vote for? I'm a Muslim Canadian, a student, someone with foreign credentials, soon to be a graduate looking for work. I've got parents to think of in terms of their health care and retirement. Similarly, all Muslims and Muslimahs on campus have the intention of getting married soon, so we need to think about the future as well.

There are a lot of things to examine and look at. Let's see how this current government does. Next election, I'll vote for the party that is looking out for the best interests of both Muslim and non-Muslim Canadians alike.

By: A Muslim Canadian

COMMITTEES IN REVIEW

Brothers' Events

Assalaamu alaikum,

May peace be upon you all! As your Events' Coordinator on Campus, I take the responsibility to make 2004-2005 a thrilling and fun-filled year. The Events committee is established to foster a sense of unity between Muslims on campus by organizing events that will appeal to a wide range of students with diverse interests. Our aims are:

a. To provide an Islamic environment in which Muslims can feel at home

b. To promote self-development (motivation and encouragement) through participation in various activities that will build leadership and interpersonal skills

c. To build a cohesive network of brotherhood (and sisterhood) on campus by advancing one-on-one interaction among members and non-members

d. To learn from mistakes in the past and improve the overall effectiveness of events through quality and feedback

e. Most of all to unite all the Muslims on campus, and encourage new students to join the MSA without any fear of being branded with stereotypes.

With your support and Allah's (*subhana wa ta'ala*) *barakah* (blessings) we will create an MSA atmosphere that will encourage one and all to join us in our activities without any pressure. Together we will take MSA to every corner of the campus to the hearts of Muslims and non-Muslims because Islam is a way of life that is meant for the humanity as a whole.

Now, coming to our plans for the year… We will add some more colourful activities to the bunch of already existing fun activities. The Events Committee will organize events that will attract brothers and sisters on campus and help them to know each other more deeply.

Insha'ALLAH, we plan to bring back the big hit - BOSS event and the TGIJ in a new form, with continental foods. Sports such as Cricket, Badminton, Basketball, Soccer and Table Tennis will continue this year, with the addition of a Foosball Tournament and Swimming (God willing☺) and *halaal* Kung-Fu lessons for brothers☺. Besides all these we will organize anything that you people recommend. Be it rock-climbing, ice-skating, horse riding or anything you can think of. Just come up with any crazy idea and we will put it on paper and present it to our exec buddies, and if the event is found feasible, we go party.

More importantly, while we are having all the fun in the world throughout the year, we will make sure we are properly inculcating our ultimate objective in all our events, i.e., our *obudiya'at* (worship or devotion) to Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*). Our first and foremost intention behind all our events will be to please Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*) and gain His mercy. Therefore, all our events will be made 100% *halaal* fun.

So, what are you waiting for? Join the Events Committee and be a part of making this year's events the best ones ever. The success of all our events will be solely possible with your help and support, so contact us with all your input and suggestions at msaevents@hotmail.com . It's just the beginning of the year, and you could be the part of the organizing committee and help make this year a grand slam!

Wasalamu alaikum
Ahtisham Ashraf
Brothers' Events Coordinator (2004-2005)
Industrial Engineering, 2nd Year
University of Toronto

Outreach Committee

Assalaamu Alaikum,

Alhamdulillah, the MSA Outreach Committee is set to continue our *Dawah* work on campus. This year's theme will be "The Muslim Mind" giving non-Muslims a glimpse of life from a Muslim's perspective. Lectures will be delivered with an academic focus, demonstrating that belief in Islam does not entail surrendering reason and logic, rather it involves using both of those God-given qualities to strengthen our faith. Lectures will be organized with this theme in mind and will be centered on modern day social issues, morality, and science. Our annual Islam Awareness Week (IAW) will also follow this theme comprising of thought provoking displays, books, and other forms of media. We hope that this year's IAW will be an effective forum for non-Muslims to converse with us personally in one-on-one discussions so that we may answer their questions about Islam while also obtaining a sense of how Muslims are perceived amongst non-Muslims. Other initiatives, such as a *Dawah* Booth outside of the Bahen prayer area and weekly Qur'an reading circles for non-Muslims are being planned to provide this type of forum for non-Muslims throughout the year.

During the month of Ramadan all MSA committees will be extremely active, *insha'ALLAH*. The Outreach Committee is planning to contribute by participating in the 3rd annual fast-a-thon project that is being sponsored all over the country by MSA national. During Ramadan, non-Muslims will be encouraged to fast for one day in an effort to raise money for a local food bank. Local business sponsors will be invited to donate one dollar for each non-Muslim that agrees to fast. On the designated day, fasting non-Muslims will be invited to an *iftaar* dinner where a speaker will talk about the importance of fasting in the Islamic tradition. In the past the fast-a-thon program has proven to be an effective means of bringing Muslims and non-Muslims together in a very welcoming environment, which is something that the Outreach committee is striving for here on our campus.

The Outreach committee will also be providing monthly programs for Muslims on campus. Local Imams and Shaikhs will be invited to address topics such as Islamic Jurisprudence and Shariah Law as well as other more grass root topics such as Islamic Activism and Differences in Islamic schools of thought. Each program will take place on the first Monday of every month, starting this September. The first program will be a Workshop aimed at giving Muslims on campus the skills and tools necessary to do effective *Dawah* work on campus. This will be a good introduction to the Outreach committee for people who wish to join in our efforts.

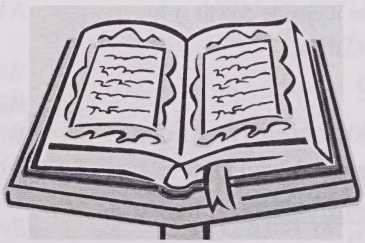
Insha'ALLAH, I pray that our work will be successful this year. We have a very ambitious plan and we need as many volunteers as possible to achieve all our goals. Although there is a stigma here in the west against people who advocate for a particular religious group, we hope to sweep away that stigma by making people realize that we are not here to convert everyone to Islam, but simply to educate people about our way of life and to erase the negative image that Islam and Muslims have here in the west. With these intentions stated out clearly, non-Muslims do appreciate what we have to say. With pure intentions, not even the smallest of commitments will go unrewarded, *insha'ALLAH.*

If you would like to participate in this work, you can either come to one of our regular meetings or e-mail me personally at msa_outreach@yahoo.ca.

JazakAllahu Khairan,

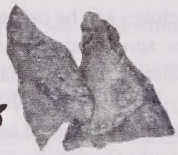
Gamal Seif
MSA Outreach Coordinator

For more information and details on how to sign-up to the MSA e-mail listserv, visit the MSA website at www.utoronto.ca/muslim



C Poetry r n e r

Halaqas & Samosas



I went to a Halaqa yesterday,

Such gatherings, just make my day.
Learning about 'Great Muslims & Muslimahs' of the past,
Whose tales will, forever last.

To my surprise the brothers' halaqa for long, did not last,
But the sisters' one kept going....they were having a blast,

Why, WHY OH WHY?!?!?!?

Other brothers I could not find,
If this goes on, the sisters would leave the brothers behind

At least I was there, no objection
But I know I'm an exception :)

(At the Halaqa) Such good people to meet,
Oh look!!, Brownies & Somosas you just can't beat,
Jazak ALLAHU Khairan to one who made such a delightful treat
No other brothers AH WHO CARES, more for me to eat!!!

Samosas, Samosas you truly wear the Crown,
Compared to you all other treats are going down

Exams are near, so anyone with a frown,
HAVE A SAMOSA to turn it upside down! :)

By: Happy Secrets

Empower Yourself! Let your creative juices flow...join the MSA's very own Poetry Society! Email asmhuss@yahoo.ca for more details.

Knock Knock

Crushed soul
Crushed crushed crushed
Emptiness
A void

Knock knock
Who's there
Victim
Victim of what?
(silence)
Victim of what?
(silence)
Well then tell me your story
They look at my clothes not me
They look at my scarf not my mind
Oh how shallow the look
Oh how deep the impact
Woe what a sorrowful condition

Silence
I am silent

Silence no more
Should I pour my thoughts out?
Should I show you my bleeding wounds?
Would you cure it?
Answer me
Answer me
Would you cure it?

Sethe had a chockcherry tree on her back
And I have one on my mind and heart
Beloved is sixty million and more
And I am the entire humanity
We all suffer at our own hands
We suffer because of our weaknesses
The Sostoris has drawn a blank card
A blank card I say, a blank card

Would you cure it?
Would you
Would you
Would you cure racism

By: Sucher

THE ULTIMATE POETRY CHALLENGE!!!

THE BEST IS HERE SO BRING IT ON!!

Poetry was not my thing
Coz how many poets you know, got the bling?!,

Enter this game, I was not sure if I should,
Then I was inspired... I felt I could

This gave rise to Da'wah Star
With it, I raised the bar!

All you poets are really good,
Be it bros or the sistas in da hood (Hijab ;)

But now Farhan's here to stay
So go ahead, make my day

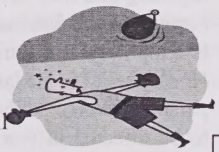
I bring forth this challenge, or call it a test
For I would like you all, to be at your best

Come On, Come On!, your thoughts & poetry is what
I want you to bring,
The MSA poetry society shall be our ring,

I guess all this is just no use,
Coz M.D.'s now on the loose!

My rhymes move like a butterfly & sting like a bee,
So better forget my challenge & just flee

Take care you MSA poets in this bout,
Like Muhammad Ali, I'll knock you out



For those who take this challenge, I shall wait,
But PLEASE like Muslims, don't be late :p

Why not just stand aside,
Or better yet, just hide

For this is a game that I have won,
Even before it has officially begun

Shout out!!!, one & all "Beat Farhan?! No one Can!!!"
Coz I'm the Vocal Hit-Man

Farhan Muhammad Asrar
Faculty of Medicine,
University of Toronto, St. George Campus

What do you think? Think you can out-smart, out-write, or out-rhyme Farhan? Send us your thoughts and submissions at muslimvoice@yahoo.ca to win cool prizes.

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Iman BIL yawm al aakhar

BELIEF IN THE LAST DAY AND ITS PROFOUND IMPACT ON A MUSLIM

AL-GHAYB: ITS UNDERSTANDING

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. May He send His choicest peace and blessings on His slave and messenger.

When one deals with issues of belief in Islam, it is important to define terminology at the very onset. This is particularly important because every word has both a linguistic meaning as well as a connotation in the Shariah. Linguistically, *al-ghayb* means the unseen. So what does belief in the *al-ghayb* specifically mean in Islam? Clearly we know that belief in the unseen has a very prominent position in Islam. Sa'id bin Mansur reported from Abdur-Rahman bin Yazid who said,

"We were sitting with 'Abdullah ibn Masud when we mentioned the companions of the Prophet (sallAllahu alaihi wasallam) and their deeds being superior to our deeds. 'Abdullah said, 'The matter of Muhammad (sallAllahu alaihi wasallam) was clear for those who saw him. By He other than Whom there is no God, no person will ever acquire a better type of faith than believing in Al-Ghayb'" [Related by Said bin Mansur, 2:544]

Having established the importance of belief in the unseen, it is most useful to make a connection from belief and its manifestation in the day-to-day life of a Muslim. Intuitively, being such a critical part of the Islamic creed, belief in the last day is bound to impact a Muslim's worldview significantly.

As part of belief in the unseen, belief in the day of judgement is specifically central to the Islamic Creed. Commenting on its importance, Ibn Abbas (*radi'Allahu 'anhu*) said, *"Yawm ad-din is the day of recompense for the creatures, meaning the Day of Judgement. On that day, Allah will reckon the creation for their deeds, evil for evil, good for good, except for those whom He pardons"* (Related by Ibn Abi Hatim, 1:19).

THE IMPACT OF IMAN BIL YAWM AL AAKHAR

• On account of their belief in the last day, a Muslim is **just**, as there is a realization that he must answer for each and every action, being it individual or collective. Imam Bukhari and Muslim recorded that Allah's Messenger *(sallAllahu alaihi wasallam)* said,

"(On the day of judgement) Allah will grasp the earth and fold up the heavens with His right hand and proclaim ' I am the King! Where are the kings of the earth? Where are the tyrants? Where are the arrogant?'" [Related by Fath al Bari, 1:604 and Muslim, 3:1688]

Hence, belief in the last day gives a Muslim a sense of awe of Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)*'s Majesty and Sovereignty. It helps to make the Muslim realize his insignificance vis-à-vis Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)*, The Mighty and Exalted. Regardless of how much power and authority a Muslim enjoys in this life, their belief in the last day steers them clear of tyranny, arrogance and oppression.

• On account of their belief in the last day, a Muslim is **patient and forgiving**, realizing that sometimes, real justice cannot always be found in this world. Such patience guides the Muslim away from actions that seek instant results, often a cause for people to operate outside the parameters of the Shariah.

• On account of their belief in the last day, a Muslim is **balanced**, seeking to take from this world what he needs to earn the hereafter. His focus is undeterred, and his goal is unchanging. Ad-Dahaak said on the authority of Ibn Abbas, "*Allah's Messenger says, 'On that day, no one owns anything that they used to own in the world.'*" This should remind the Muslim that everything that we own in this world is temporary and limited to the domain of this life alone. Hence, belief in the last day gives a Muslim a truly balanced perspective on exactly how much effort and attention needs to be directed in worldly affairs. This perspective draws directly from the individual's recognition of the severity of the last day and its impact.

• On account of their belief in the last day, a Muslim is **fearful and hopeful**. He longs to meet his Lord in goodness, constantly fearful of not having done enough, and balancing that with the hope that as long as he did the best that he could, he has built a foundation for good expectations.

• On account of their belief in the last day, a Muslim is **vigilant**, as he knows that his arch-enemy, the *shaitan* is always looking to sway him from a good result on the last day. Furthermore, regardless of how attractive the enticement of *shaitan*, he realizes that on the day of judgement, the

Continued on page 29

REMEMBRANCE OF ALLAH

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

"*The difference between the one who remembers his Lord and the one who does not is like the difference between the living and the dead.*"
(Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

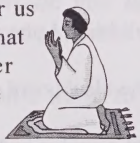
What do we really want in life? For a moment, think of anything that you want in your life. And then ask yourself: *"Why do I want this thing?"* You will find that when you ask yourself: *"Why do I want that?"* and then continue to ask yourself this question to each successive reply … in the end, it all comes down to feeling good. The bottom line is: anything that we want in our lives, no matter what it is ... we want it for the FEELINGS, the good feelings that we think the desired thing will bring us. The only reason we desire anything in life is in order to get a certain, good feeling out of it. And there is only one thing that can give us the BEST feeling: the Dhikr (Remembrance) of Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)*.

"***Surely in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find peace.***"
[Qur'an, 13:28]

It is evident that in the remembrance of the Glorious Allah lies nothing but joy, and that is why the hearts come into complete, everlasting tranquility. We might find pleasure in worldly things, but the good feelings that we think they give us do not last. For instance, we might want a brand new car because we really desire the feelings of prestige and happiness that we think it will bring us, yet these feelings will change with the rusting of the car.

Remembrance of Allah is the foundation of strengthening *Taqwa* (consciousness of Allah, the Wise) and *Tawakkul* (trust in Allah, the Compassionate), which help to increase *Iman* (faith). Our hearts will naturally desire good deeds, as going nearer to Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* brings immense pleasure. When we see that doing good actions yields great results – the countless bounties that He consistently bestows on us – we will want to go closer and closer to Him with a burning desire. We will put more potential into pleasing Him so that we continue to get His blessings and win His love for us as well. And Allah (*subhana wa ta'ala*), the Exalted will continue to come to us. Abu Hurairah *(radi'Allahu 'anhu)* narrated that the Prophet Muhammad *(sallAllahu alaihi wasallam)* said: Allah the Almighty said: *"... And if he comes to Me walking, I go to him at speed.*"
(Related by al-Bukhari (also by Muslim, at-Tirmidhi and Ibn-Majah), Hadith Qudsi 15)

Dhikr brings boundless enjoyment and passion to our hearts. Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* will continue to come to us and shower us with His rewards. What else can derive better feelings than the closeness to Allah, the Protector?



OBVIOUSLY, NOTHING CAN!

How must we engage in the remembrance of Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* to get what we REALLY want - good feelings? Dhikr of Allah, the Majestic, refers to remembering Him in any action, speech, and thought from which He would be pleased. For example, praising and thanking Him as well as repenting and asking for forgiveness from Him. The many kinds of dhikr include: numerous dhikr of tongue and heart having no restrictions on place, time, and frequency (e.g. *Salawat* – sending blessings and salutations on Prophet Muhammad *(sallAllahu alaihi wasallam)*); Salat; gaining knowledge; reciting, understanding, and following the Noble Qur'an.

Without doubt, the rank, emphasis, and merits of dhikr of Allah, the Loving, are phenomenally high and His remembrance should be associated with everyday life. We not only get fulfilled wholeheartedly (satisfaction of the mind, body, and soul), but we also get protected from all negativities (e.g. wrong actions/ thoughts, *Gheebah* –backbiting, *Buhtaan* – slander, jealousy, envy, showing-off, etc.) by the Beneficent. Striving for the Hereafter becomes easier and thus remembrance of Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)*, is a gateway to success for both worlds.

"***Those men and women who engage much in Allah's praise. For them has Allah prepared forgiveness and a great reward.***"
[Qur'an, 33:35]

Asna Ahmad
University of Toronto (St. George)
Faculty of Arts and Science

The Elves and the Shoemaker

Starring The Doctor & Azim Da Dream as the elves

Apart from the executives' disregard for their office hours and the members' general ignorance of its existence, the MSA office has had one other enduring problem. Cleanliness, an integral part of the *deen*, is virtually nonexistent in room 405, despite the fact that this tiny office located at 21 Sussex Ave. is frequented by fourteen executive members and the TMV staff.

It's rather surprising then that this rather bleak office recently saw some legendary visitors. I am not referring to the Visiting Pigeons, but rather to those industrious elves last seen in the famous fairy tale by Brothers Grimm.

In the story, the poor shoemaker went to bed one night without finishing a repair job on a pair of shoes, but upon waking the next day found the job done. Likewise, there was a lot of office cleanup to do after BOSS (Brothers Only Sports Social), held in May 2004, but when Faraz and Abdullah put it off for weeks, the elves had to help out. My suspicions were aroused when I heard people say "*It's cleaner than I've seen it in a long time!*" or *"Good job, Faraz and Abdullah!"* when in fact Abdullah was in Haiti and Faraz was camping…

Then ISSA came by in June 2004, and crates and cartons cluttered the office again. But on the day of the first MSA Office Tour, the elves must have been at it again (strong elves, apparently!)

But, alas! Good things come to an end. The shoemaker's wife, in appreciation of the elves' work, made them two woollen jackets. The elves got what they needed and so they quit.

In order to prevent another repeat of last year, the new executives are *already* assigned office cleanup tasks. On the other hand, we could just invite the tooth fairy…

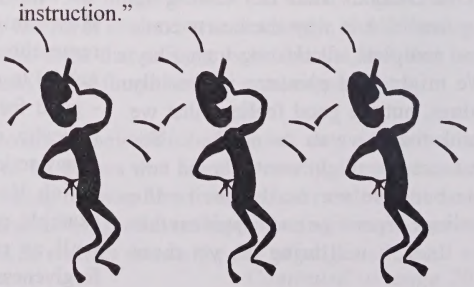
Faraz Siddiqui,
Year 3, Biology
University of Toronto (St. George)

The Corny Corner

A group of six year olds were in a classroom. Their teacher is encouraging them to spell. So she asks "Well class.... tell me what you did at break time."
Little Cindy raises her hand and she says "well Miss, I played in the sand box"
"Very good" said the teacher. " Come up to the blackboard and if you can spell sand, I'll give you a cookie."
Little Cindy spelled the word sand and she got a cookie and was very happy. Next Little Tommy raised his hand and said " I played in the sand box with Cindy"
"Very good" said the teacher, "Come up and spell box and I'll give you a cookie".
Little Tommy spelt box and he got a cookie and was very happy. Next, Mustafa Mahmoud raised his hand and said "I tried to play in the sand box with Cindy and Tommy, but they wouldn't let me, they threw stones at me"
"Goodness gracious" said the teacher " that is terrible... that is blatant racial discrimination!" "Come up to the board and spell blatant racial discrimination and I'll give you a cookie"

BREAKING NEWS!

At Heathrow Airport today, an individual, later discovered to be a public school teacher, was arrested trying to board a flight while in possession of a compass, a protractor and a graphing calculator.
"Authorities believe he is a member of the notorious Al-Gebra movement. "He is being charged with carrying weapons of math instruction."



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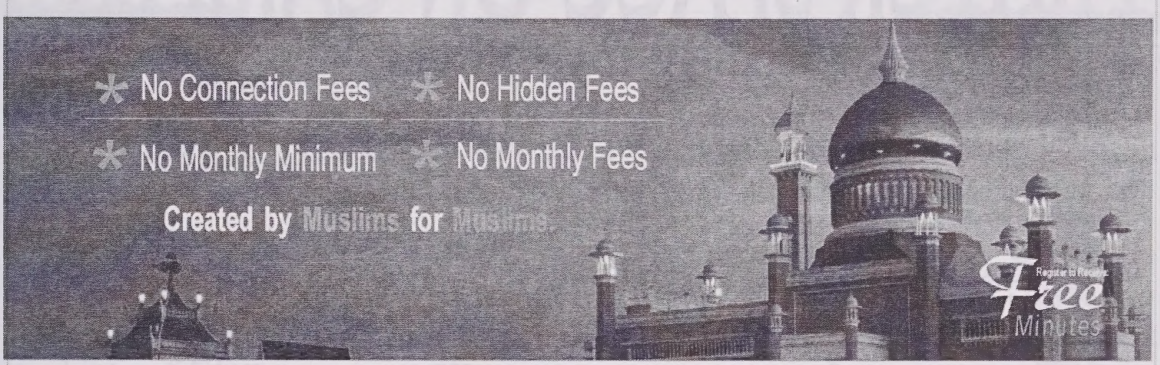

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Iman Bil Yawm Al Aakhar continued from page 26

shaitan will acquit himself of the believer, proclaiming that Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* made a promise and he *(Shaitan)* also made a promise, and in the end he lied. A Muslim never loses sight of the reality of the liar's promises.

• On account of their belief in the last day, a Muslim is **conscious** of his time, his self, and indeed, all the blessings of Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* to him. This is because the Muslim realizes that the day of judgement represents the time when he will be called to account for all the bounties that he enjoyed in this life.

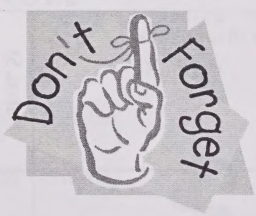
• On account of their belief in the last day, a Muslim is **aware**, looking around him to seize any opportunities to do good and to better his chances of earning his Lord's acceptance. He is also mindful of the signs of the day of judgement itself. He studies them, realizes their significance and ensures that he is doing his best to protect himself from the turmoil that is talked about pertaining to the end of this world.

• On account of their belief in the last day, a Muslim is above all, **guided**. He is guided to the true purpose of his life, to the end of all affairs, to the ultimate source of hope and to the absolute measure of balance in life. Furthermore, a Muslim's belief in the last day is not plagued by incoherence and superstition, but is marked by detailed prophecies and wisdom.

Syed Nouman Ashraf,
University of Toronto (St. George), Alumni

SIGN-UP FOR MSA-L!

Would you like to know about MSA events?
Want to know when & where Jumu'ah might be held on campus?
Don't want to miss important announcements?



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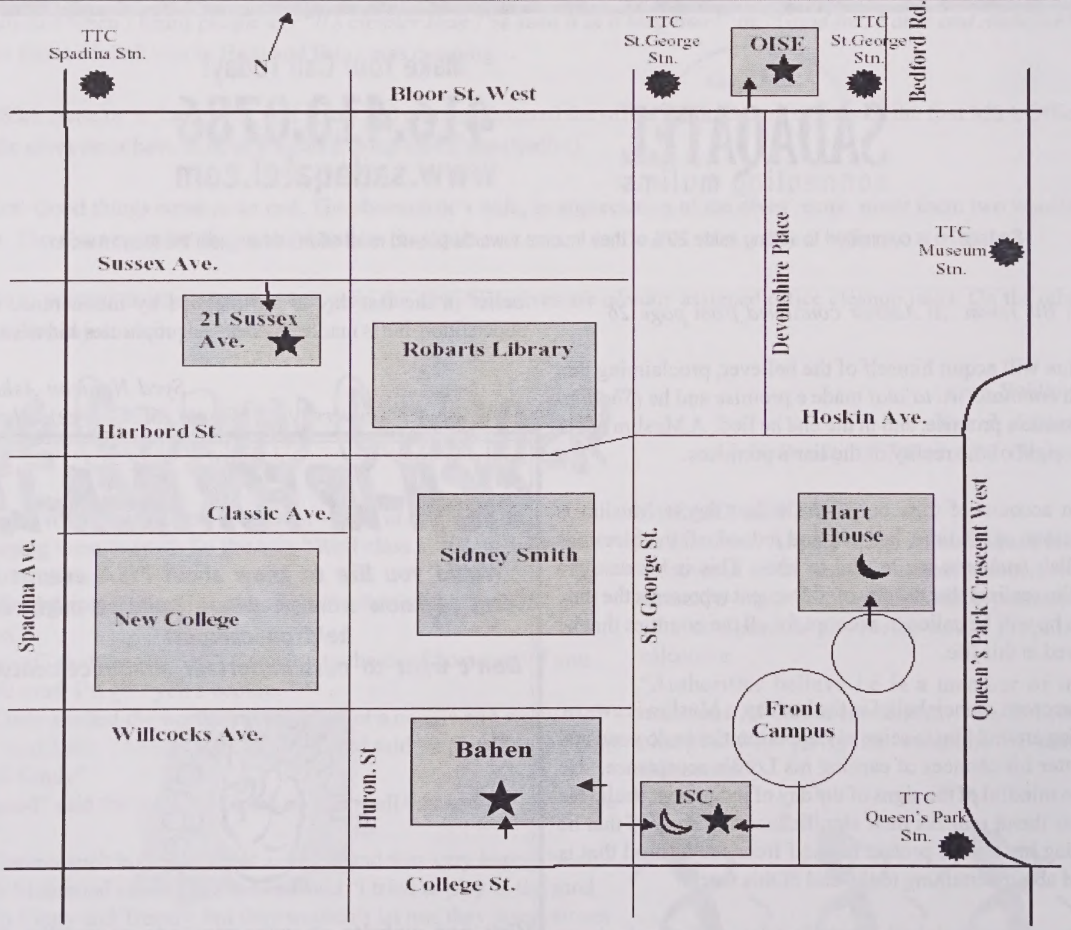
PRAYER SPACE ON CAMPUS

★ Daily Prayer Locations:
- **ISC** - International Students' Centre, 3rd floor
- **OISE** - 252 Bloor St.W., 8th floor, room 136
- **21 Sussex Ave.** - 5th floor, room 508

☾ Main Jumuah Prayer Location, 1-2pm
- **Hart House** – 7 Hart House Circle, 2nd floor, Debates Room

☾ Alternate Jumuah Prayer Location:
- **ISC** - International Students' Centre, 3rd floor

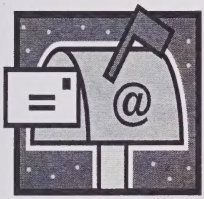
University of Toronto St.George Campus Prayer Locations



Muslim Students' Association, University of Toronto, St.George Campus
Website: http://www.utoronto.ca/muslim, E-mail: msa.exec@utoronto.ca
Hotline: 416-946-7788 (voice mail), Office: 21 Sussex Ave., Suite 405

The Poll:
Muslim Comedy

Recently there has been a sharp increase in the number of Muslim comedians in North America. Their reasons for becoming comedians range from trying to dispel misconceptions about Islam to using comedy as a Da'wah tool. What do you think of Muslim Comedy? Is comedy a valuable tool for Islam and Muslims? Or are Muslim comedians taking it a bit too far?



Send your answers to muslimvoice@yahoo.ca
Poll results and selected comments will be published in the upcoming issue of The Muslim Voice.

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~WORDSEARCH~
"GREAT WOMEN OF ISLAM"

1. SUMAYYAH BINT KHABAT (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
2. ZAINAB BINT KHAZEEMAH (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
3. FAREEAH BINT MALIK (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
4. AISHAH (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
5. FATIMA BINT ASAD (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
6. UMM ROOMAN (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
7. SAFIYYAH BINT HUYAYEE (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
8. FATIMA BINT MUHAMMAD (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
9. UMM SALAMAH (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
10. HAFSAH BINT UMAR (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
11. KHADIJAH (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
12. SAUDAH BINT ZAMAH (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
13. ZAINAB BINT JAHASH (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
14. JUWAYRIAH BINT HARITH (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)
15. UMM AIMAN (*radi'Allahu 'anha*)

(Continued from page 17) torture. With each new succession of torture and humiliation, Bilal repeated the words "*Ahad! Ahad!*" meaning '*the One*' (God). There was no form of torture that could sway the belief of Bilal in the Oneness of his Lord and the truth of His message.

But Umayya and Abu Jahl persisted. They dressed Bilal in an iron coat, placed him in heavy chains and lay him on the hot sand to face the blazing heat of the desert sun. Umayya and his companions watched and waited. Bilal suffered in the heat. His only words in response to Abu Jahl and Umayya, were, *"Ahad! Ahad!"* When Abu Jahl ordered a large stone to be placed over Bilal's chest, Bilal repeated, "*Ahad! Ahad!*" When they continued to shout, taunt and insult him, Bilal's words were, *"Ahad! Ahad!"* When his voice became weak and they gathered, waiting for him to reject the oneness of Allah, Bilal's words were, *"Ahad! Ahad!"*

Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* in His mercy sent Abu Bakr (*radi'Allahu 'anhu*) who, hearing and seeing the injustice and torture that Bilal suffered through, offered to purchase him from Umayya. The transaction was completed, and Bilal, purely by the mercy of Allah, was freed from Umayya's grip. Abu Bakr, in turn, freed Bilal, who under the folds of Islam became truly free.

Let us, the servants of Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* in today's world, learn from the story of Bilal (*radi'Allahu 'anhu*). Let us utter the words, *"Ahad! Ahad"* and like Bilal, believe them. Let us, like Bilal, ingrain these words into our hearts and pledge true servitude to the truth they express. Let us, like Bilal (*radi'Allahu 'anhu*), have faith in the face of adversity, and with our minds, with our hands, with our feet and with our souls work to serve Allah *(subhana wa ta'ala)* and strive to truly understand the blessing that is Islam.

Shoilee Khan
Year 3, English, History & Professional Writing University of Toronto (Mississauga campus)

"And your god is One God; There is no god except Him, the Beneficent, the Merciful"

[Holy Quran 2:163]

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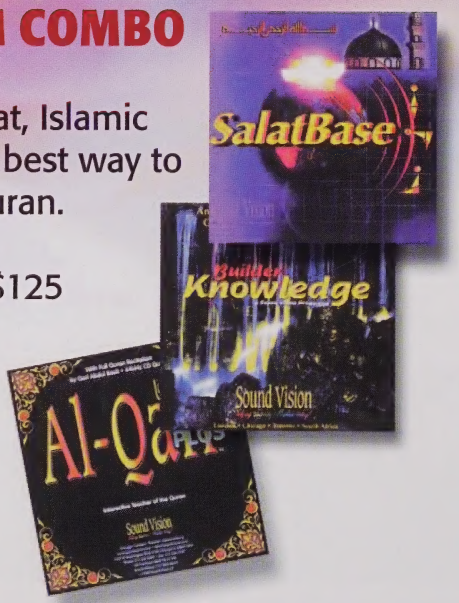

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